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## **Teetering on the edge: portraits of innocence, risk and young female sexualities in 1950s' and 1960s' British cinema**

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# Teetering on the edge: portraits of innocence, risk and young female sexualities in 1950s' and 1960s' British cinema

Janet Fink and Penny Tinkler

**'... girls start off together, have the same chances. Some go straight, others go bad.'**

***Beat Girl* (1959)**

## Abstract

This article explores how British social problem films in the late 1950s and early 1960s represented social anxieties around the sexuality of girls in their mid-to-late teens. Its analytic focus is upon the risks posed by modern social life to the teenage girl's sexual innocence and it argues that attending to this hitherto often neglected sexual state brings new insights to cultural histories of young female sexualities. Discussion draws upon *Beat Girl* (1959), *Rag Doll* (1960), *Girl on Approval* (1961) and *Don't Talk to Strange Men* (1962), highlighting how these films situated the figure of the teenage girl in the liminal space of child-adult and girl-woman and how this informed concerns about her sexual vulnerability. By unpicking the films' different approaches to viewing and representing this liminal space - through the lenses of adolescence and young womanhood - we demonstrate how at this historical juncture the intersections of gender and age are differently emphasised and given meaning in cinematic portrayals of sexual innocence.

## Introduction

In this article we consider how British cinema in the late 1950s and early 1960s articulated and worked through anxieties about the gender and sexuality of girls in their mid-to-late teens. There have been wide-ranging studies of social problem films from this period and their portrayal and problematization of young women's sexual (im)morality, particularly around the issues of pre-marital sex and prostitution.<sup>1</sup> Our focus, however, is upon films which have been largely neglected in this research thus moving beyond well-known 'classics' of the social problem film genre in order to examine films in which the teenage<sup>2</sup> girl's nascent sexuality and adolescent immaturity dominate the narratives: *Beat Girl* (1959), *Rag Doll* (1960), *Girl on Approval* (1961) and *Don't Talk to Strange Men* (1962).<sup>3</sup> By identifying and analysing post-war British films which have not previously been brought together as resources through which to examine representations of the teenage girl, the article has three aims. The first is to explore how the figure of the sexually innocent teenage girl was represented in a period that was arguably on the cusp of a sexual revolution<sup>4</sup> and the second is to consider the ways in which her innocence was understood and shown to be at risk because of her adolescent vulnerability and embodied young womanhood. Our third and overarching aim is to demonstrate that by focusing on sexual innocence, rather than transgressive sexual states, new terrain in the cultural histories of young female sexualities can be exposed and established.

This period is significant for such histories because of the increased numbers of 15-24-year olds compared to a decade earlier,<sup>5</sup> the heightened profile and commercialisation of youth culture<sup>6</sup> and a

preoccupation with sexuality.<sup>7</sup> Here 1950s' concerns about young people shifted from a focus on the delinquency of mainly working-class young men to concerns about the incidence of pre-marital sex which brought the behaviour of young single women into the limelight.<sup>8</sup> These concerns were reinforced by the new educational, employment and sexual horizons that were beginning to open up for young women<sup>9</sup> and by the declining age of marriage which complicated perceptions of what it meant to be a teenage girl<sup>10</sup>. Cinema engaged equally with these debates about the seemingly changing nature of female sexuality, but as Geraghty suggests, it could do so in different ways from youth professionals and policy-makers; with its important role in youth leisure and courtship practices, cinema had 'much at stake in youth and its pleasures'.<sup>11</sup> Cinema sought to engage with its young audience as if it were an insider rather than a professional and adult outsider; this entailed an empathic narrative and visual representation of youth perspectives and desires that was exclusive to this media.

Our study enables us to reflect on the spaces social problem films created in modern Britain for exploring new articulations of young female sexuality in conjunction with concerns about the attendant risks to the teenage girl's sexual innocence. It also opens up different approaches to analysing social problem films that have young female characters as their central concern. Hill and Landy, for example, focus on *youth* and point to the ambivalent use of the teenager in such films to represent the attractions and dangers of affluence, sexuality and the influence of the mass media.<sup>12</sup> Geraghty explores instead representations of care and social responsibility towards younger *children* and what these reveal about emerging understandings of their vulnerability and psychological wellbeing.<sup>13</sup> Our discussion bridges these analytic foci by highlighting how the films examined here situate the teenage girl in a problematic *liminal* stage between childhood and adulthood, girlhood and womanhood. This entails addressing film not only in terms of narrative – the beginning, middle and end of a story. It also involves considering other interpretative possibilities afforded by *how* the story is conveyed through film, including pleasures in the image and the use of fashionable clothes, hair styles, the female body, music, and stars to augment those pleasures.<sup>14</sup>

The paper is organised in five parts. We begin by introducing the cinematic context in which the films that form the focus of our discussion were produced, and set out a brief synopsis of their respective storylines. Part two then examines the inherent riskiness of being a teenage girl, exploring how different risks to her sexual innocence are represented and the ways in which these are informed by and understood through the particular socio-cultural and demographic features of late 1950s' and early 1960s' Britain. Such features include girls' increasing spatial mobility; the extended reach of predatory men as a result of new technologies; the growth of youth culture; the failures of modern family life; and girls' earlier physical and sexual maturation. From this we argue that the teenage girl in these films is situated in the liminal space between childhood and young adulthood and that the *gendered* significance of this space for portraits of sexual innocence and risk in 1950s' and 1960s' Britain can be interrogated through the films' use of different lenses to portray the teenage girl: the emotional and psychological vulnerability of the adolescent and embodied young womanhood. To exemplify our argument, the third and fourth parts of the paper approach the films through these two lenses and draw out the different analytic insights they bring to our study. In the paper's final part, we return to the value of understanding the teenage girl's liminality in portrayals of sexual innocence and risk in this period and how this focus opens up new dimensions in cultural histories of young female sexualities.

## 1. Cinematic context and the films

The films that form the focus of our discussion were made on the cusp of two very different socio-cultural historical periods which, as Peplar has identified, had 'distinctively different images: the 1950s of Dixon of Dock Green, austerity, the coronation and the Festival of Britain; and the 1960s of permissiveness, representations of working-class life, women's liberation and Swinging London'<sup>15</sup>. In framing our argument about the use of images across these films and situating them clearly in the context of their production, we are thus attentive both to Conekin *et al*'s argument that the story of modern (post-war) Britain is a 'hybrid affair'<sup>16</sup> and to the period's structure of feeling in which there were many tensions between the period's residual, dominant and emerging ideas and values.<sup>17</sup> *Beat Girl*, for example, portrays 'modern' life through images of Jennifer's avant-garde home in which there is a stark absence of warmth and comfort in the design of the house and in the familial relationships being played out there. In comparison, the representation of Jean's home in *Don't Talk to Strange Men*, released some two years later in 1961, remains redolent of 1950s' cosy domesticity, with its log fires, chintz furnishings and affectionate parent-child relations. However, neither of the teenagers' homes or families is able to withstand what Harper and Porter identify as the disorder and irregularity of the modern public sphere.<sup>18</sup> The films thus reinforce the unsettling experiences of post-war Britain.<sup>19</sup> They show, for example, not only the excitement of youth culture in *Beat Girl* and the attraction of love and romance in *Rag Doll*, *Don't Talk to Strange Men* and *Girl on Approval*, but also the fear and anxiety engendered in parents as they seek to protect their physically mature but emotionally naïve daughters - and their sexual innocence - from these powerful forces.

The films are 'B-movies'. They were low budget and shown as support features for often more expensively produced mainstream films. *Girl on Approval*, for example, was screened in 1962 as a support feature for the acclaimed 'New Wave' British film, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*.<sup>20</sup> They are also products of independent film makers, who were seeking to bypass what Harper and Porter identify as 'the corporate financial and moral caution exercised by the industry's major distributors' and portray issues of contemporary relevance to audiences of late 1950s' and early 1960s' British cinema.<sup>21</sup> In this, the film makers appear to have been successful with '28 out of the 37 most popular British movies between 1958 and 1962' being independently produced.<sup>22</sup> Moreover their casts include well-known and respected actors with, for example, BAFTA award-winner and Oscar nominated Rachel Roberts appearing in *Girl on Approval*, and Christopher Lee in *Beat Girl*. This is not to say that stars attracted audiences to see a film; surveys of the period were unable to 'separate a star's appeal from the popularity of the film in which he, or she, appeared'.<sup>23</sup> However the inclusion of high profile pop stars like Adam Faith<sup>24</sup> and Jess Conrad who feature in *Beat Girl* and *Rag Doll* respectively, suggests a deliberate targeting of young people<sup>25</sup> in order to increase the potential popularity of a film by exploiting the growing 'cult of celebrity' in 1950s Britain.<sup>26</sup>

Such a strategy was crucial since cinema admissions generally had dropped from 755 million in 1958 to 501 million in 1960 as a result of the closure of cinemas across Britain as well as the emergence of an increasingly home-oriented culture in which the attraction of television was central<sup>27</sup>. But at the same time young people in employment dominated cinema audiences because of their spending power<sup>28</sup> and because dating experiences often included a visit to the cinema; for example, 51% of the adolescents in Michael Schofield's study of sexual behaviour went to the cinema on a first

date.<sup>29</sup> In such ways cinema became part of youth culture, reinforcing its presence by profiling pop stars and including sound tracks to films that were directed at the tastes of young people and their uses of pop music 'to reinforce and unify a distinctive cultural identity'.<sup>30</sup>

However the films' narratives also encompass the 'problems' of being a teenage girl and, as such, are part of the social problem film genre, in that, as Landy has claimed,<sup>31</sup> they combine:

social analysis as dramatic conflict within a coherent narrative structure. Social content is transformed into dramatic events and movie narrative adapted to accommodate social issues as strong material through a particular set of movie conventions.

Social problem films of this period also had distinctive features of social realism which, as Raymond Williams has argued, is committed to including or emphasizing 'hidden or underlying forces or movements'.<sup>32</sup> For the films discussed here, a realist lens powerfully illustrates the extent to which young women's experience of sexual risk is portrayed as the product of modern social life.

In *Beat Girl* (1959), upper middle-class Jennifer (aged 16) despises her father's way of life and also rejects overtures of friendship from the 24-year-old French woman, Nichole, who becomes her stepmother. She is, instead, absorbed in a hedonistic youth culture, which revolves around coffee bars, clubs and the pursuit of 'kicks' with her group of friends who include the singer/musician Archie, played by Adam Faith. When Jennifer discovers Nichole has not told her father about being a striptease dancer and prostitute in Paris, she sets out to use this knowledge against her stepmother. These machinations introduce Jennifer to the world of striptease and bring her into contact with the predatory owner of a striptease club, Kenny, who tries to seduce her. The film ends with a distraught Jennifer being led away from the club by her parents. Jennifer is tucked protectively under one of her father's arms, his other arm is round Nichole: a sign, perhaps, of reconciliation and potential for the reconstituted family.

*Rag Doll* (1960) features 17-year old Carol, who works as a waitress in her alcoholic stepfather's transport café. After an attempted sexual assault by one of the drivers, condoned by her stepfather, Carol furiously quits her job and hitches a lift to London where she is quickly taken under the wing of an older woman, 'Auntie', and wealthy coffee bar owner, Mort. She rejects Mort's efforts to seduce her with new clothes and glamorous nights out, and falls in love with a young nightclub singer and petty criminal, Jo Shane. They quickly marry when Carol discovers she is pregnant but Jo declares they need to make a new start for themselves in Canada as, with a wife and child, his career as a singer will never be successful. To fund the journey, Jo burgles Mort's house but is discovered by Mort, whom he shoots dead. Jo and Carol go on the run in a stolen car but he has been wounded in the burglary and the film concludes with the police tracking down a mortally injured Jo and a distraught Carol, who realises that her romantic dreams of married life are over.

*Girl on Approval* (1961) focuses on Sheila, an illegitimate 14-year old girl who has grown up in several children's homes because she was deserted, aged three, by her mother. Social workers at the Home are anxious to find a foster family for Sheila but she proves difficult to place because of her aggressive and hostile behaviour. Lower middle-class couple, Anne and John Howland, agree to foster Sheila and she joins their family in the suburbs of London. The drama focuses on how the couple cope with caring for this vulnerable teenage girl, whose naivety about the intentions of predatory men puts her sexual innocence at risk, and how, eventually, they are able to integrate her

into their family, thus offering her the space and time to develop into an emotionally and psychologically mature young woman.

*Don't talk to Strange Men* (1962) is set in a rural location. Middle-class Jean, aged 16, answers a ringing telephone in a public telephone box while waiting for a bus in a lonely country lane. Over the course of several evenings, she is groomed by the caller and becomes romantically besotted by him. Jean uses a visit to the cinema with her younger sister Anne, aged fourteen, as cover to meet the caller at the telephone box. At the last minute, she becomes frightened and, realising her folly, decides against meeting him. Meanwhile, back at the cinema, Anne becomes increasingly anxious at what Jean plans to do and so goes to the telephone box thereby becoming prey herself to Jean's caller; a man who has murdered several young women in the area. Neither girl is harmed, however the final lines of the film point to the impossibility of protecting the teenage girl's sexual vulnerability even in the most caring of families. When asked by her parents how she had made her way to the telephone box, Anne replies, 'I thumbed a lift'. When questioned further about who gave her the lift, she innocently responds, 'I don't know; some man'.

## **2. Representing modern social life, risk and sexual innocence**

The late 1950s and early 1960s thus emerge in British social problem films as a period which featured intense and pervasive risks to the sexual innocence of all teenage girls; risk was no longer specific to particular spaces or to girls from particular social classes. Although these discourses of risk remained prominent, British cinema reveals a heightened and historically-specific perception of the perils of modernity as young women from across the social-class spectrum are exposed to old and new forms of sexual risk.<sup>33</sup> For example, modern families are often presented as failing their children. Emotionally distant fathers, absent mothers and 'broken' families are recurring features in representations of risk because they do not provide a fixed point of order and security for their daughters. The problem, however, is also partly presented as a peculiarly modern lapse in parental understanding brought about by physical, emotional and social changes in how girls are growing up in this period. One outcome of this ignorance is that parents often mistakenly treat their teenage daughters as children: girls are not guaranteed privacy at home and parents attempt to regulate their behaviour and bodies. Parental regulation is thereby shown to provoke tensions and rebellion, chiming with oral history evidence about the ambiguous status of young women who lived at home, and the tensions between parents and daughters around issues of privacy, autonomy and self-expression.<sup>34</sup> Resonating with wider socio-cultural scrutiny of parents and their relationships with their teenage children,<sup>35</sup> the films present modern parenting as challenging; parents are expected to take responsibility for, and protect their daughters, but also to understand them and give them safe space in which to negotiate and establish their independence.

Teenage girls are portrayed at even greater sexual risk when *out of place*, be it on the move or living away from home because of work, leisure opportunities or demands for independence.<sup>36</sup> Here, streets are a recurring visual motif signifying the vulnerability of young women and range from almost deserted roads wreathed in darkness, to brightly, even garishly, lit streets. Such lights emphasise also the lure of big cities and the dangers of modern urban life although concerns about the sexual vulnerability of young women living away from home, especially in cities, were not new. The interwar initiatives of the Girls' Friendly Society illustrate, for instance, how lone young women

working in big cities became the focus of support and assistance.<sup>37</sup> But the prominence afforded by the films to this theme of being 'out of place' is indicative of a modern twist to understandings of the risks posed by girls' spatial mobility; one which is focused on their exposure to predatory men and exemplified by the startling speed with which men are shown honing in on solitary women in the urban spaces of 1950s' and 1960s' Britain. While there was a long-standing recognition of the dangers posed by some men to women and of the vulnerability of young women alone in cities, the films suggest these particular risks were accentuated because of the conditions of late modernity.<sup>38</sup> Predatory men are shown to be commonplace, ordinary figures but their 'reach' is extensive because of their access to modern technologies, such as cars and the telephone, and because teenage girls are no longer safely 'in place', within the boundaries of home and family. The equally high profile afforded to men from the sex trade is arguably also testimony to a contemporary preoccupation with the 'modernized practices of prostitution'<sup>39</sup> and the commercialisation of sex that was covered extensively in the press throughout the 1950s.<sup>40</sup>

There were also other risks attributed to modern social life, including the early (premature) physical and sexual maturity of young women because of improved nutrition, the number of girls not staying on at school beyond the minimum school-leaving age of 15,<sup>41</sup> mass commercial youth culture and the increased demands of youth for autonomy and new forms of pleasure. By the late 1950s 'youth' was increasingly presented in the media as distinctive in looks and behaviour; this distinctiveness was displayed through clothes and hairstyle, leisure and consumption practices. Historians point out that youth culture was not new,<sup>42</sup> but from the mid-1950s it became a distinctively modern, commercialised and high-profile mass cultural phenomenon that was perceived by contemporaries as a new development and, moreover, as contributing to a 'generation gap'.<sup>43</sup> Films feature only glimpses of the distinctive forms of youth consumption described by Mark Abrams,<sup>44</sup> but each film registers the presence of youth culture and its potential risks for girls. Cate Haste, for example, describes a change in pop music from the 'agonies of adolescent love of the late 1950s charts' to music that expressed 'frustration and disillusionment'.<sup>45</sup> Our films suggest that both forms were seen as potentially problematic for girls, fuelling romantic fantasies or youthful rebellion and the hedonistic pursuit of 'kicks'. Girls were at risk, therefore, even if they only engaged with pop music in the private context of 'bedroom culture',<sup>46</sup> while youth cultural spaces such as jazz clubs, dance halls and coffee bars were shown to be especially dangerous public places for young women's nascent sexuality.<sup>47</sup>

The sexual risks associated in these films with being a teenage girl are, therefore, extensive and can be understood as the product of her status as 'half child, half adult'.<sup>48</sup> This situated her in a liminal space and generated different perceptions of the risks posed to her sexual innocence, depending upon whether she was viewed in the films' narratives through the lens of emotionally and psychologically vulnerable adolescent or that of embodied young woman.<sup>49</sup>

There was a raised awareness in this period of what was commonly referred to as 'the problems of adolescence',<sup>50</sup> described by Walker and Fletcher in the mid-1950s as 'a long slow process of maturation marked by wild vagaries of mood and instability of judgement'.<sup>51</sup> Using the lens of adolescence, then, the films focus upon the figure of the teenage girl in terms of her development; that is, she is understood as moving from child to adult and making the transition from immaturity to maturity. Here age is paramount, but it is inflected by gender, and often results in an emphasis on the teenager as a school or college girl, an institutional identity that was informed by discourses of



adolescent development. Sexual changes relating to puberty are identified as drivers of this development and they underpin aspects of the teenage girl's distinctive emotional and psychological identity and vulnerability, but unlike young womanhood, embodiment is not foregrounded.

The films' use of a second lens, young womanhood, characterises girls in terms of the transition from girl to young woman. This, conversely, is a gendered lens, inflected by age, and it highlights embodiment; girls' bodies, sexuality and appearance. As Ruth Adam noted of this period, teenagers were the healthiest and strongest generation on record and also the earliest maturing: 'Girls reached puberty at thirteen and their full height between sixteen and seventeen. They looked and felt like women long before they came to the end of their official childhood'.<sup>52</sup> This phenomenon was widely perceived as a product of modern nutritional standards and it attracted much media attention in the late 1950s. Illustrated with numerous photos, the *Daily Mirror's* generally positive series on the 'Beanstalk Generation' (1958-9) focused on the difficulty of visually distinguishing between teenage girls of thirteen and young women in their late teens, particularly if girls dressed like young women. Films focused on the implicit risks for girls: that they might be mistaken for women or that they might try exercising their sexuality like them. However this conundrum was gender-specific. There was no suggestion that boys and young men could be mistaken for one another.

It is clear that being a sexually innocent female teenager was viewed as inherently risky in British cinema at this moment in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century but the narratives of her experiences are constructed differently depending on the lenses through which girls are presented. These lenses can be difficult to tease apart and often overlap but, as we go on to illustrate, they also offer rich opportunities for identifying the disjunctures and contradictions that featured in representations of the teenage girl, and her nascent sexuality and adolescent immaturity, in this period.

### **3. Emotional vulnerability and the female adolescent**

Though modern gendered constructions of adolescence emerged in the pre-1950s and informed provision for, and treatment of, young people,<sup>53</sup> the late 1950s and early 1960s are characterised by the popularisation of these conceptions in recurrent features in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers and in some teen magazines.<sup>54</sup> In these contemporary narratives, manifestations of awkwardness and defiance<sup>55</sup> were often presented as markers of the teenage girl's liminality as she makes the transition from child to adult.

In our films and their use of the adolescence lens to view the teenage girl, these markers were equally present. In *Girl on Approval* Sheila is portrayed as taciturn, destructive, uncooperative and violent. She also swears and steals. However explanations for Sheila's emotional instability are also attributed to growing up in care after being abandoned by her mother. Having been rejected by other foster parents, she has had no sustained mothering and, as a result, is shown to be unable to forge relationships of trust with adults who try to help her. Her immaturity is thus powerfully foregrounded, both by Sheila who demands and rejects the maternal care offered by her new foster mother, and the social worker who is anxious to provide the teenager with the stability of an intact family so that she has the 'same advantages as other girls, with a home and a family' behind her. It is only through the experience of such a family, the film suggests, that Sheila's sexual innocence can be protected through adolescence, allowing her to develop into a mature adult with a future as wife

and mother. There is, however, an urgency about this because Sheila has only five to six years to acquire the skills and qualities associated with female maturity. It is also because there are signs of Sheila's emergent sexuality, exhibited mainly through flirtatious behaviour towards her foster parent, John. As her foster mother observes in a moment of jealousy, 'She'd take notice of anything with trousers on and three hairs on his chest'.

Safeguarding Sheila through these crucial years maintains and defends the future of the nuclear family but the film also engages critically with family life. Although the Howdens are portrayed as offering Sheila a safe haven in which she can make the transition to womanhood, the film foregrounds the speed at which their couple relationship begins to unravel as they try to manage the teenager's disruptive presence in their home. Here the norms of 1950s' gender relations are central. Anne Howden's life is bound by the private sphere of home and her domestic responsibilities as wife and mother. The idea of fostering a young girl is prompted by Anne's need for companionship because the couple's move from Wales to London has separated her from family and friends. The film thus draws normatively gendered similarities between Anne and Sheila; they are each lonely, isolated and volatile female figures. Anne struggles to contain her jealousy of the time her husband, John, invests in Sheila and she is also unsettled by any close physical contact between them as we noted above, which Sheila uses to forge a wedge between the couple. In this, then, the demands of living with the emotional turbulence created by adolescent girls are shown as also posing a risk to the stability of the nuclear family and the marital relationship. Ultimately it is only Anne's maturity, as adult woman and mother that enables her to integrate Sheila into the family home and mediate Sheila's challenge to her marital relationship.<sup>56</sup>

Like Sheila, sixteen-year-old Jennifer, in *Beat Girl*, is portrayed as uncooperative, sulky, rude and defiant of adult authority but she also engages in minor acts of youth rebellion, such as smoking, as well as a hedonistic pursuit of 'thrills' and 'kicks'. These result in her being described by another college girl as 'the crazy one'. The film thus reflects how, in this period, adolescence was associated with rebellion, and youth culture was understood to be a way of expressing this. As noted by the clinical child psychotherapist, Mary Battle, in her series on adolescents for *The Observer*: 'Beware the well-behaved'.<sup>57</sup> However Jennifer also slips in and out of her youthful status in her encounters with adults. On the one hand confrontations with her father are, in part, about being recognised as an independent individual; explaining her use of youth slang, she says it is the way 'we [young people] can express ourselves... it makes us different'. On the other her immaturity is signified by her regression to childhood as a means to be awkward. When Nichole accuses Jennifer of being childish she retorts that she is a child; when she declines an alcoholic drink to celebrate her father's marriage to Nichole it is because 'she's too young to drink'.

In *Don't Talk to Strange Men*, Jean is not represented as an awkward teenager, but her adolescence is marked most notably by her romantic fantasies. This is an increasingly popularised representation of female adolescence.<sup>58</sup> Jean's fantasies are focused on an unknown male phone caller; she falls 'in love' with his voice and his observations about her. After only the second telephone conversation, Jean is swooning and declares dramatically to her mother that 'I've said goodbye to my childhood'; she tells the bus conductor she has a 'boyfriend'. A glimpse of Jean's bedroom walls adorned with pictures of pop and film stars, suggests that youth culture may have laid the foundations for her susceptibility as well as the allure of romantic love, promulgated in popular culture more broadly<sup>59</sup>. It is romance, therefore that motivates Jean, not sexual interest, and she becomes hesitant when the

caller suggests she is 'sexy'. Her mother explicitly attributes Jean's swooning to the distinctive psychology of adolescent girlhood. Although she suspects that Jean has fallen for her brother-in-law, because 'girls do that sort of thing at their age', she is unconcerned, which serves to normalise and naturalise Jean's behaviour.<sup>60</sup> Romantic love is typically presented as a harmless aspect of female adolescence as long as the girl is adequately guided and protected by appropriate adults; without this protection these fantasies could lead girls into danger.

Jean is part of a caring intact family. However she is put at risk because her father still perceives her to be a *child* and does not appreciate the dangers of modern technology (the public telephone box) so unrealistically attempts to shield her from the threats posed by predatory men by simply asserting his paternal authority and restricting her independent movements. As a result Jean becomes rebellious and, in her ignorance that a man has been murdering young women in the local area, her immaturity makes her an easy target of the killer's seemingly romantic phone calls and she loses her ability to think sensibly, unlike her fourteen-year-old sister. After a frightening series of episodes in which Jean recognises the danger in which she has placed herself, and her younger sister is abducted by the killer, the girls are returned safely to their parents. They have teetered dangerously on the edge of sexual innocence but the success of their 'rescue' will, as the concluding lines of the film suggest, need to be constantly defended.

Romantic fantasies and immaturity are also foregrounded in Carol's story. On her home turf, she seems used to discouraging the unwanted attentions of men, but when she leaves home and is out of place, it is clear that she is naïve and romantic in her assessments of men. When Mort, the owner of a coffee bar chain, attempts to seduce her, she initially thinks him 'wonderful'. Auntie tries to protect Carol from Mort but this surrogate mother/daughter relationship is not strong enough to prevent her from falling in love and being seduced by the young singer, Jo Shane. Without family, Carol's sexual innocence is sacrificed to romantic love. As Mort remarks when she first comes into his Soho coffee bar, she's a 'chick just fallen out of the nest'; a child prematurely ousted from the safe environment of home and family and so at risk from city life and men's predatory nature. Although the film suggests it is Jo's criminal behaviour that is the 'problem', not his sexual relationship with Carol, it is Carol's adolescent immaturity that has led her to fall in love with the wrong man.

#### **4. Risk and the embodied hallmarks of young womanhood**

Focusing on the teenage girl through the films' lens of adolescence brings into view how the risks posed to her sexual innocence are connected to her awkwardness, rebellion and emotional immaturity but, by examining how the films use the lens of young womanhood, a differently configured set of risks around embodiment is exposed. Sheila, Jean, Jennifer and Carol are all physically recognisable as teenagers, but the embodied hallmarks of young womanhood are frequently subtle, often fleeting and sometimes slippery. Sartorial markers, in particular, are literally put on and taken off, allowing the films' teenage protagonists to deliberately and explicitly slip between girl and young woman, and back again. Identifying, therefore, the ways teenage girls' bodies and appearances are represented illustrates not only how the figure of the teenage girl is situated in the liminal space between girl and woman but also why this is important for the films' narratives about risks to sexual innocence. British cinema deployed important visual markers to

signify the teenage girl's difference from both pre-teen girls and adult women. Hair styles and clothes were crucial in denoting this distinction and in identifying the different stages of female maturation. The teenagers who appear in our selection of films have long hair and wear it down, unlike their mothers and other adult women in their social circles whose hair is short or worn in a chignon. Sixteen-year-old Jean in *Don't Talk to Strange Men* wears her hair long with an Alice-band but her clothes mark her as older than her sister, Anne, who is always shown in her school uniform. In the opening scenes of *Girl on Approval*, Sheila's long hair identifies her as different from both the younger girls in the children's home and the adult social workers. But like Anne, she is also most often seen in her school uniform or, when outside the home, wearing a school raincoat. In such ways clothes are used to signify the different transitions to young womanhood.

Neither Sheila nor Jean is visually identified as a fully-fledged young woman. Moreover, as discussed earlier, it is their adolescent immaturity and rebelliousness that leads them out of place and puts their emergent sexuality in danger. However, it is notable that male 'strangers' perceive their liminal status as girl-woman and are attracted by it. In a silent encounter with an older teenage girl waiting for her boyfriend, Sheila's school raincoat and flat shoes are quickly assessed and dismissed as having any appeal to young men. Yet an older man watches and then approaches Sheila as she roams the streets after running away from her foster parents. Her willingness to engage with the stranger and pleasure at her ability to attract the man's interest exposes her to sexual or physical assault, and it is only the timely arrival of her foster father and the police that warns off the predatory man. In Jean's case, she is also approached by an older man as she waits by the phone box for the mystery caller-cum-murderer to call although she deftly refuses his advances. At the same time, there is a singular but significant sartorial indicator that her attacker has correctly identified as situating her, and indeed his other victims, on the cusp of young womanhood. The murdered young woman, glimpsed in the opening scenes of *Don't Talk to Strange Men*, has long hair, which is a classic marker of young femininity, but more suggestively we hear (rather than see) that she wears high heels as she walks along the deserted road at night. When Jean goes to meet her mystery caller, the click-clicking of heels is replicated. This sound establishes connection between the two young women and the danger they face, while their high-heeled shoes signify their nascent sexuality and emergent young womanhood.

Carol's experiences in *Rag Doll* provide a particularly graphic rendering of the predatory nature of men. The opening scene depicts Carol working in her stepfather's café where she is exposed to sexual suggestions from two male customers. In order to pay his drinking debt, her stepfather gives one of the men permission to sexually assault Carol. She is rescued by the other customer, who then helps Carol leave home by giving her a lift to London in his truck. But before dropping Carol off he tries to persuade her to spend time with him; an offer she declines, reminding him that he has a wife and children. Ironically, his subsequent and seemingly genuine offer of help to Carol, should she ever need it, confirms that even 'nice' men are a risk to the teenage girl's sexual innocence. Once she reaches London, Carol's hairstyle, clothes and bodily demeanour make her girl-woman status immediately recognisable. In a single glance, the coffee bar owner, Mort can tell 'she's a nice girl'; 'nice' being a euphemism for a lack of knowledge and experience of sex. However when Carol loses her sexual innocence after embarking on a relationship with the singer, Jo Shane, this is clearly identified in the film through Carol's clothes: in the first bedroom scene her petticoat is white, in the second it is black. It is also portrayed through the ways she relishes embracing and kissing Jo. This physical pleasure situates Carol as having made the transition to a sexually mature woman, albeit

outside a marital relationship. While it is argued that there was widespread condemnation in British society at this time of women who had premarital sex<sup>61</sup> and Melanie Bell-Williams has suggested this disapproval also pervaded films of the period,<sup>62</sup> our reading of *Rag Doll* indicates a more sympathetic approach that may have resonated with how many young women thought about sex. Premarital sex was not uncommon amongst 15-19 year old girls,<sup>63</sup> and there is evidence that many young women were 'not hostile' to the idea of pre-marital sex between people who were in love and who planned to marry.<sup>64</sup> In *Beat Girl*, Jennifer is seemingly cynical about romantic love - 'love, that's the gimmick that makes sex respectable' – but this glib comment aptly identifies how *Rag Doll* avoids outright condemnation of Carol's pre-marital sexual relationship while highlighting the dangers to the teenage girl of pregnancy and being used by a man.

Jennifer similarly enjoys her awakening sexuality, exploring its potential and its physical expression.<sup>65</sup> Yet *Beat Girl* also illustrates the difficulties of fixing the teenage girl in the liminal space between girlhood and womanhood. Jennifer uses her hair, body and clothes to represent herself differently depending on the situation- to slip between girl and young woman. Her appearance in the opening scenes of the film announces her youthful subcultural identity, portrayed through her clothes, eye make-up and long, tousled hair. This identity creates the gendered space for Jennifer to express her nascent sexuality; we see her impassioned dancing and her sensual pout as she is aroused and intoxicated by the beat of the music. In a bedroom scene in which Jennifer appears in her skirt and bra, Jennifer makes clear that while she and her 24-year old step mother differ in experience, their bodies are equally mature: 'Are you embarrassed because I have a nice figure?' On other occasions Jennifer transforms herself into a demure college girl, dressed in unassuming clothes and wearing her hair tightly styled, thus conforming to a rigidly gendered and age-related set of expectations about physical appearance that denote 'girl'. Transgressions from this childlike appearance to that of rebellious teenager raise parental anxieties about the dangers of displaying emergent womanhood, with Jennifer's father angrily proclaiming, 'Those clothes. That muck on your face. They make you feel grown up, but you're still a little girl'.

Jennifer is portrayed as lacking the maturity to realise the importance of containing and managing her emergent womanhood. This is a reference to her immature adolescent psychology, but the portrayal of Jennifer's thrill-seeking reveals also the elision of young womanhood and hedonistic youth culture. Jennifer and her beatnik friends thrive on risky behaviour, but she is the most daring. In a game of chicken where everyone puts their head on a railway track as a train approaches, Jennifer is the last to remove hers and is a whisker away from death. Jennifer's search for excitement is also driven by her uncontained sexuality and she is almost seduced by the frisson of stripping. When Jennifer turns down the offer of a job as a strip-tease artist, ostensibly because she does not need the money, the manager describes the 'thrill' the performers report getting from the work. After Archie taunts her at a party for being 'like an iceberg', she starts to strip. Though also a means to taunt her stepmother, Jennifer seems to enjoy the sensual pleasure that comes with the affect she has on Archie, who urges her on: 'go girl you're warming me'. The sexual risk is averted when Nichole stops the performance at the point where Jennifer is clad only in her white, Playtex-style bra and very-full knickers, a telling visual reminder that Jennifer is still sexually innocent. However Jennifer's thrill-seeking puts her most at risk when she returns to the strip club to visit Kenny. As he starts to remove Jennifer's top she is strangely still. Her response is ambiguous: is she experiencing physical excitement, akin to playing chicken, or is she paralysed by fear? For a moment,

Jennifer teeters on the edge of sexual innocence, but Kenny's seduction and assault is stopped abruptly when his jilted lover plunges a knife into his back and Jennifer is hastily returned to the care of her father and stepmother. The transition to adult woman is portrayed as a fraught experience for parents and daughters alike.

Notwithstanding this emphasis on the riskiness of being a teenage girl, the films also offered sexually innocent young women in the cinema audience an opportunity to vicariously enjoy the frisson of risky sexual behaviour and engage their own youthful sexual desires; no other media provided this youthful perspective on female sexuality at this time. However both *Rag Doll* and *Beat Girl* subject the girls' bodies to the male gaze, with the camera lingering on Carol's half-dressed state as she lies on the bed with Jo and on Jennifer's bare shoulder when she is being seduced by Kenny, the sleazy strip club owner. Their respective loss and impending loss of sexual innocence, and resulting transition to womanhood, mean they are no longer shielded from a public and sexualised gaze, and the films' narratives of the implications of this loss are conveyed through voyeuristic explorations of the female body and sexuality. On the one hand, then, these social problem films portray a progressive understanding of teenage girls' vulnerability to the promise of romance and the threat of sexual exploitation by engaging explicitly with the risks posed by modern social life. Yet, on the other, woven through their resolutions is a more conservatively gendered view of the dangers of 'teetering on the edge' of sexual innocence. Jean, Jennifer and Sheila are returned safely to home and family where their future womanhood as wife and mother can be assiduously protected by parents who have come to understand the sexual risks faced by their teenage daughters. For Carol, however, the loss of her sexual innocence precludes any future salvation and the film closes with an emphasis on her desolate and deserted state; a classic melodramatic ending in the long history of films about women who transgress society's sexual boundaries.<sup>66</sup>

### Concluding comments

Our exploration of these films and the contextualisation of our enquiry reveals not only how all teenage girls were understood to be at risk sexually in 1950s' and 1960s' Britain, irrespective of their age, social class, geographical location or family background, but also how the socio-cultural boundaries of sexual innocence were being constructed and shaped by the dynamics of modern social life. Our research thus opens up new terrain in cultural histories of young women's sexualities by illustrating that this period was a turning point in perceptions of teenage girls' relationship to sexual risk. More significantly, however, by focusing upon social problem films that have been less extensively researched, we have identified and illustrated how concerns about sexual innocence, a hitherto often neglected state in such histories, were as endemic at this historical juncture as anxieties about sexual transgressions, such as pre-marital sex or promiscuity. Important to our analysis has been our identification of the ways the figure of the teenage girl was situated in the liminal space of child-adult and girl-woman and how this informed anxieties and concerns about her sexual vulnerability. By unpicking the films' different approaches to viewing and representing this liminal space - through the lenses of adolescence and young womanhood - we have demonstrated how the intersections of gender and age were differently emphasised and given meaning. The portrayal of the adolescent was primarily characterised, for example, by her age and youthful immaturity while that of the young woman was personified through her gendered body and

appearance. However the films fail to conclusively fix their female protagonists within one of these lenses thus illustrating the slippery and problematic nature of liminal spaces and the difficulties of defining the teenage girl. This is an important insight for studies of post-war British cinema and, in particular, social problem films. It points to a diversity of understandings about the teenage girl growing up that could not be easily reconciled in this period and that work to explain the emergence of new perceptions of young female sexuality in the decades that were to follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Melanie Bell (2010) *Femininity in the Frame: Women and 1950s Popular Culture* (London: IB Tauris); Melanie Bell-Williams (2006) 'Shop-soiled' Women: Female Sexuality and the Figure of the Prostitute in 1950s British Cinema in *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 3(2), 266-283; Janet Fink (2011) For better or for worse? The dilemmas of unmarried motherhood in mid-twentieth century popular British film and fiction, *Women's History Review*, 20 (1), pp.125-138; Janet Fink and Katherine Holden (1999) Pictures from the margins of marriage: representations of spinsters and single mothers in the Victorian novel, interwar Hollywood melodrama and British films of the 1950s and 60s, *Gender and History*, 11 (2), pp. 233-255; John Hill (1986) *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-63* (London: BFI); Kerry Kidd (2003) 'Women of Twilight' in Ian MacKillop and Neil Sinyard (eds) *British Cinema of the 1950s: A Celebration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); Lola Young (1996) *Fear of the Dark: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Cinema* (London: Routledge).

<sup>2</sup> Market researcher, Mark Abrams, defined the teenager as a single person aged 15-24 years - Mark Abrams, *Teenage Consumer II* (London, 1961). The term was also used to refer to someone in their 'teen' years' i.e. 13-19. Our argument is developed through the latter. On definitions, see Adrian Horn (2009) *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and youth culture 1945-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 90-1.

<sup>3</sup> Our approach to this particular study of sexual innocence, risk and the teenage girl builds upon our previous research into representations of teenage girls and young women in post-war British cinema, fiction, magazines and newspapers. The four films discussed here were identified after an extensive scoping exercise in which we watched all British films, released in the period between the late 1950s and early 1960s, which featured a teenage girl protagonist. The films were selected because they explore issues of risk and innocence extensively thereby allowing us to identify similarities and differences in the films' narratives and the ways these were reflected in post-war British society.

<sup>4</sup> Hera Cook (2004) *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex and Contraception 1800-1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>5</sup> Lesley. A. Hall (2000) *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain Since 1880* (London: Macmillan).

<sup>6</sup> Bill Osgerby (1998) *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell).

<sup>7</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change*.

<sup>8</sup> Pre-1950 there had been concerns about the sexuality of single young women, but 'the delinquent adolescent female was something of a rarity' and concerns focused principally on working-class girls – Carol Dyhouse (2013) *Girl Trouble. Panic and Progress in the History of Young Women* (London: Zed), pp. 105-121 (p.121). See also Penny Tinkler (2003) Cause for Concern: young women and leisure, 1930-1950, *Women's History Review*, 12 (2), pp. 233-260.

<sup>9</sup> Christine Geraghty (2000) *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, genre and the 'new look'* (London: Routledge); Elizabeth Wilson (1980) *Only Halfway to Paradise. Women in Postwar Britain: 1945-1968* (London: Tavistock)

<sup>10</sup> By 1965, 40% of brides were under 21 years when they married, compared to roughly 15% in 1921, see Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, pp.124-5. See also, Stephanie Spencer (2009) 'Girls at risk. Early school-leaving and early marriage in the 1950s', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 41(2), pp.179-192.

<sup>11</sup> Christine Geraghty (1997) 'Women and Sixties British Cinema: The development of the "Darling" girl', in Robert Murphy (ed.) *Sixties British Cinema* (London: BFI publishing), pp.154-5

<sup>12</sup> Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*; Marcia Landy (1991) *British Genres: Cinema and Society 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

<sup>13</sup> Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, pp. 133-146.

- <sup>14</sup> Geraghty, 'Women and Sixties British Cinema', pp. 155, 159; Geraghty, *British Cinema*, p.84.
- <sup>15</sup> Michael Peplar (2002) *Family Matters: A History of Ideas Since 1945* (London: Longman), p.72.
- <sup>16</sup> Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Walters (eds.) (1999) *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London: Rivers Oram Press), p.3.
- <sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams (1977) *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- <sup>18</sup> Sue Harper and Vincent Porter (2007) *British Cinema in the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.271.
- <sup>19</sup> Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, p.24.
- <sup>20</sup> For discussion of British New Wave Cinema, see Stuart Laing (1986) *Representations of Working-Class Life* (London: Macmillan).
- <sup>21</sup> Harper and Porter, *British Cinema in the 1950s*, p.184.
- <sup>22</sup> Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, p.41.
- <sup>23</sup> Harper and Porter, *British Cinema in the 1950s*, p.250.
- <sup>24</sup> John Montgomery (1965) *The Fifties* (London: George Allen & Unwin) notes that in 1959 Adam Faith's recording *What Do You Want?* sold 49,500 copies in one day and his sequel *Poor Me* was an equal bestseller.
- <sup>25</sup> Geraghty, *British cinema in the Fifties*, p.8.
- <sup>26</sup> Montgomery, *The Fifties*. See also Gillian A.M. Mitchell (2013) Reassessing 'the generation gap': Bill Haley's 1957 tour of Britain, inter-generational relations and attitudes to Rock 'n' Roll in the late 1950s, *Twentieth Century British History*, 24 (4) pp. 573-605.
- <sup>27</sup> Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*; Bell-Williams, *Femininity in the Frame*; Mark Janovitch and Lucy Faire with Sarah Stubbings (2003) *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption* (London: BFI).
- <sup>28</sup> See Abrams, *Teenage Consumer*.
- <sup>29</sup> Michael Schofield (1965) *The Sexual Behaviour of Young People* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p.56.
- <sup>30</sup> Cate Haste (1992) *Rules of Desire. Sex in Britain: World War 1 to the Present* (London: Chatto & Windus), p.162.
- <sup>31</sup> Landy, *British Genres*, p.432.
- <sup>32</sup> Raymond Williams (1976, 1983) *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana) p.261. See also Julia Hallam with Margaret Marshment (2000) *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 45-51 for discussion of 'realist moments' in British films produced between 1959 and 1963.
- <sup>33</sup> Pre-1950s film focused more on young men than young women although there were some British films about working-class 'good time girls' in the 1930s and 1940s, see Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, pp. 112-6. In the 1950s and 1960s this orientation shifted with the rise in concerns about young women and the incidence of pre-marital sex; the sexually innocent young woman also came into focus in the context of risk.
- <sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Roberts (2002) *Women and Families: An Oral History, 1940-1970* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell). See also discussion of how 15- and 16-year old school girls portrayed their life in Huddersfield: Brian Jackson (1968) *Working Class Community* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) pp. 132-146.
- <sup>35</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 19 September 1958, p. 13; *The Observer*, 25 May 1958, p.10.
- <sup>36</sup> Penny Tinkler (2014) 'I've got my own life to live': the teenage self and lifestyle in young women's magazines, Britain 1957-70, *Cultural & Social History* 11(4), pp. 597-620.
- <sup>37</sup> Madeleine Roof (1935) *Youth and Leisure* (Edinburgh: Constable).
- <sup>38</sup> Anthony Giddens (1991) *Modernity and Self-identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press); Ulrich Beck (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity* (Munich: University of Munich Press).
- <sup>39</sup> Gillian Swanson (2007) *Drunk with the glitter: Space, consumption and sexual instability in modern urban culture*, (London: Routledge), pp.74-5
- <sup>40</sup> Adrian Bingham (2009) *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private life and the British Popular press 1918-1978*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.166-7.
- <sup>41</sup> There was a widespread belief, especially among educationalists, that young people should remain in part-time, if not full-time, education until they were eighteen. Although the Education Act (1944) provided free state education for all children up to 18 according to ability, most working-class young people left school at fifteen and many middle-class youth, especially girls, at sixteen. The importance of educational provision for adolescents aged 15-18 was much discussed, eg Ministry of Education (1954) *Early Leaving. A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* (London: HMSO); Ministry of Education (1959) *15-18. A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* (Crowther Report) (London: HMSO). See: Spencer, 'Girls at risk'; Penny Tinkler (2001) Youth's opportunity? The Education Act of 1944 and proposals for part-time continuation education, *History of Education* 30(1), pp.77-94.



- <sup>42</sup> David Fowler (1995) *The First Teenagers: The lifestyle of young wage-earners in inter-war Britain* (London: Woburn); Andrew Davies (1992) *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-class culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939* (Buckingham: Open University Press); Penny Tinkler (1995) *Constructing Girlhood: popular magazines for girls growing up in England, 1920-1950* (Falmer: Taylor and Francis).
- <sup>43</sup> See, for example: Abrams, *Teenage Consumer*; Colin MacInnes (1960) *In England, Half English* (MacGibbon and Kee). The notion of a generation gap has been questioned, see for example, Selina Todd and Hilary Young (2012) Baby-boomers to 'Beanstalkers': Making the modern teenager in post-war Britain, *Cultural & Social History*, 9, pp. 451-67.
- <sup>44</sup> Abrams, *Teenage Consumer*.
- <sup>45</sup> Haste 1992: 203.
- <sup>46</sup> Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1976) 'Girls and Subcultures', in S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds) *Resistance through Rituals* (London: Hutchison).
- <sup>47</sup> Louise Jackson, "The Coffee Club Menace": policing youth, leisure and sexuality in post-war Manchester, *Cultural and Social History*, 5(3), 2008, pp. 289-308. Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, pp.140-1.
- <sup>48</sup> *Mirror*, 4 Nov 1959, p.9.
- <sup>49</sup> We build on the observation that teenage girls in the 1980s were caught between two contradictory discourses of adolescence and femininity, Barbara Hudson (1984) 'Femininity and Adolescence', in A. McRobbie and M. Nava (eds) *Gender and Generation* (London: Macmillan), pp.31-53.
- <sup>50</sup> For example: Hemming, *Problems of Adolescence*; 'Problems of Adolescence' series in *The Observer* May/June 1958.
- <sup>51</sup> Kenneth Walker and Peter Fletcher (1955, 1958) *Sex and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) p.98.
- <sup>52</sup> Ruth Adam (1975) *A Woman's Place, 1910-1975* (London: Chatto & Windus), p. 182. The trend towards early marriage, especially among working-class girls, further complicated the distinction between teenage girls and adult women, see note 10.
- <sup>53</sup> Tinkler, 'Cause for Concern'; Penny Tinkler (1994) An All-Round Education: the Board of Education's policy for the leisure-time training of girls, 1939-50, *History of Education*, 23 (4), 385-403; Tinkler 'Youth's opportunity?'
- <sup>54</sup> See, for example, Marie Battle's 10 part series on the 'Problems of adolescence' in the *Guardian* 1958 also the 'Beanstalk Generation' series (1959) and Mary Brown's problem page, both in the *Daily Mirror*.
- <sup>55</sup> James Hemming (1960) *Problems of Adolescent Girls* (London: Heinemann).
- <sup>56</sup> Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, notes the emphasis on female maturity in the period's literature on mothering, sexuality and employment, p.157.
- <sup>57</sup> *Observer*, 6 July 1958, p.9.
- <sup>58</sup> Hemming, *Problems of Adolescent Girls*.
- <sup>59</sup> Jay Dixon (1999) *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon, 1909-1990s* (London: UCL Press); Lynne Pearce (2007) *Romance Writing* (Cambridge: Polity).
- <sup>60</sup> Hemming, *Problems of Adolescent Girls*.
- <sup>61</sup> Pat Thane and Tanya Evans (2013) *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- <sup>62</sup> Bell-Williams, "'Shop-soiled' Women", p.275. In *Flesh is Weak* (1957), Bell-Williams also identifies tentative exploration of new forms of female sexuality.
- <sup>63</sup> 17-18% of teenage pregnancies were illegitimate 1938- late 1950s; 18.6% in 1960; 20.5% in 1962. Cited in Callum G. Brown (2011) Sex, Religion, and the Single Woman c.1950-75: The Importance of a 'short' sexual revolution to the English religious crisis of the sixties', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22(2), p.210.
- <sup>64</sup> Schofield revealed that in 1962-3, only two thirds of the young women he surveyed were 'hostile' to pre-marital sex; opposition dropped to 8% of young women by 1971. Cited in Brown, 'Sex, Religion, and the Single Woman', p.211. See also *Honey* magazine, Tinkler, 'I've got my own life to live'.
- <sup>65</sup> See also Dyhouse, *Girl Trouble*, 139-41.
- <sup>66</sup> Fink and Holden, 'Pictures from the margins of marriage'; Christine Gledhill (ed.) (1987) *Home Is Where The Heart Is* (London: BFI); Marjorie Rosen (1973) *Popcorn Venus* (New York: Coward, McGann & Geoghegan)